

## Family Court Review Panel Submissions

To have your say to the Review Panel - you and your children can do any or all of the following:

1. Use one of the Review Panels standardised mechanisms to make a submission online, email, post, audio or video. These are detailed on page 1 of the Review Panel's consultation document. ([https://consultations.justice.govt.nz/policy/rewriting-family-justice-reforms/user\\_uploads/have-your-say-on-the-family-justice-system-english.pdf](https://consultations.justice.govt.nz/policy/rewriting-family-justice-reforms/user_uploads/have-your-say-on-the-family-justice-system-english.pdf) )

In the table below, we have outlined some things we think you should consider with each of these options. You will need to make your own decisions based on the information the Review Panel has provided as to whether you feel safe to use one of these options.

**We also recommend that you look at the appendix in the letter from the Review Panel to Backbone which answers the questions we had around issues of safety and confidentiality.** (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5bb66b5f71c10b155014b525/1538681698189/Letter+to+The+Backbone+Collective+-+Final.pdf> )

Note: If you are still in the Family Court or could be at any time, or if there are orders in place restricting who you can share information with, you will need to be very careful that you do not include any detail that could be used by the Review Panel or anyone else to identify you or your case.

2. Meet with the Review Panel face to face.

This isn't a publicised option but on **5 October** we were sent this schedule of the Panel's face to face meetings.

<b>Gisborne</b>	Friday 5 October
<b>Hamilton</b>	Monday 8 October
<b>Napier</b>	Tuesday 9 October
<b>Rotorua</b>	Saturday 13 October
<b>Wellington</b>	Thu 18 and Fri 19 October
<b>Invercargill</b>	Tuesday 23 October
<b>Dunedin</b>	Wednesday 24 October
<b>Christchurch</b>	Thursday 25 October
<b>Nelson</b>	Friday 26 October
<b>Kaitiaia</b>	Monday 29 October
<b>Auckland</b>	Wednesday 31 October

It is disappointing to say the least that we were only told about these meetings on the day the first one was held! We gather these dates are still tentative so please double check with the secretariat to confirm.

Please refer to the notes in the section above and make your own determination whether you want to opt for a face to face meeting. If you do want to you can:

- a. Email the Review Panel's secretariat on [FamilyJusticeReforms@justice.govt.nz](mailto:FamilyJusticeReforms@justice.govt.nz) to make arrangements. If you have limited time and want to phone them you could try 04 498 0631

- b. If you are a woman or child/young/person who has experienced violence and abuse but do not want to give the secretariat your email address, if you would like to meet the Panel in a small group with other women who have experienced violence and abuse or if you would like to talk with us about how you could do this safely please email Ruth and Deborah at [info@backbone.org.nz](mailto:info@backbone.org.nz) and we will act as your agent to make these arrangements.
3. The Review Panel have told Backbone that they are particularly keen to hear from children/young people who have been in the Family Court.

Children/young people can opt for any of the ways listed above to have their say or they could:

- a. Share their views in the completely safe and confidential survey specifically designed by Backbone for children and/or young people who want to have their voices heard by the Family Court Review Panel. We do not ask them for any identifying details and so their responses will be anonymous.  
<https://www.surveymizmo.com/s3/4592756/5c874f7fefac>
  - b. In the response to question 17 (Appendix of the Review Panel's letter to Backbone) they say that the Panel will be commissioning an independent third-party supplier to capture in a report the lived experiences of children/young people, Māori, Pasifika, new migrant parents, and parents with disabilities who have had interactions with the family law system since 2014.
- We have asked for details of who this 'independent third-party supplier' will be and how children/young people wanting to have their say via that avenue can do that. As soon as we have been provided more information, we will post an update.
4. If you, or your children/young people are worried about your safety, contempt of court, or specific orders from the Family Court, that you believe will put you at risk if you submit via one of the avenues outlined above – we would urge you to consider the following option.

Write to the Review Panel and tell them how it feels for you to be a citizen in a first world democratic country where there is a fundamental right of all citizens to speak freely – but feel you are silenced in this instance.

If you are not able to have your say in this Review it is VERY important that the Review Panel and the Government understands why it is that the Family Court has silenced you.

(<https://www.backbone.org.nz/blog/safesubmissionsfamilycourtreviewpanel>)

You could do this by:

- a. Using their anonymous online tool and adding a sentence or two to that effect in the open question text box.
- b. Emailing or posting the Review Panel a hard copy explaining your feelings about being silenced and unsafe.
- c. Emailing Backbone on [info@backbone.org.nz](mailto:info@backbone.org.nz) and we will forward your feedback to the Review Panel.

Don't hesitate to email Deborah or Ruth on [info@backbone.org.nz](mailto:info@backbone.org.nz) if you have any questions. We will do our best to respond but unlike members of the Review Panel and their secretariat, there are just two of us doing this work and we are not paid!

Ways to have your say	Things for you to consider if you choose to use this approach.
Complete the online submission	You do not have to leave any identifying details with this option, but your computer's ISP address will be visible. The Review Secretariat assure us that this information will be stored on a secure cloud server and will never be shared with other personnel at Ministry of Justice or the Courts.
Write your own submission and email it	<p>Taking this option will mean that the Review secretariat will have your email address. You can submit under a false name and do not need to provide an address.</p> <p>You can also state clearly that you want your submission to be kept strictly confidential and not released as part of any OIA requests. The Review Panel cannot give you an assurance that any or all of your submission would never be released but have given Backbone an undertaking that they would take your request for confidentiality into account if they get any OIA requests.</p>
Write your own submission and post it.	The only difference between this option and the one above is that by posting your submission to the Review Panel you do not have to disclose your email address.
Audio or video submission	Everything that has been said above applies but unless you can disguise your voice or video yourself from behind, please be aware that you will be potentially identifiable to the Review Panel and/or anyone else if your recording is released under OIA.